



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 15—21 OCTOBER 2017

SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER	4th Sunday of Luke, Sunday of the 7th Ecumenical Council, Luke 8: 5-15 • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
• SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES (A free voluntary program organised by the Church) Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at the time of Holy Communion until Church dismissal. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment. Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love.	
MONDAY 16 OCTOBER	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER	• 7.00pm Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in Coburg Church Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.
WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER <i>St Luke the Evangelist</i>	• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER <i>St Gerasimos of Cephalonia</i>	• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER	3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER	GOSPEL READING: Luke 8: 26-39 EPISTLE READING: Gal. 1: 11-19



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Fr. Athanasios
and
Fr. Ephraim

are available
at the Church

every Monday to Friday
between
4.00 and 6.00pm

for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

THE CHILDREN'S WORD Presvytera Alexandra Houck, myocn.

Are you listening?

How many times has somebody—a teacher, your mother or father, or even a friend—told you to LISTEN? Sometimes we DO hear something, but that doesn't mean we are really listening!

In today's Gospel reading, we hear a story about somebody who goes out to the field to plant seeds. Some seeds never sprout at all. Some seeds sprout at first and then die. But some seeds fall onto good dirt, and they do sprout. They grow and grow and give a good crop.

This story shows how we should hear God's teachings. The Gospel explains that the seeds that are in the good dirt are the ones who, "hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart." They hold onto it, because the word of God is something precious!

So it's easy to *hear* the word, but we also have to *listen*. That means in church, or in church school, or when we read our Bibles, or when our parents tell us about Jesus Christ, we listen. We try to take these words about God and put them into our hearts. We try to live the words, and not just hear them. We hold them fast in an honest and good heart.

Stay Focused and Bear Fruit:

Homily for the Holy Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council and the 4th Sunday of Luke in the Orthodox Church—Luke 8:5-15

I am sure that we all waste our time and energy now and then. Of course, sometimes we need a diversion from our usual cares and there is nothing wrong with taking a rest from time to time. The problem, however, is when we find excuses not to do what needs to be done. We do not want to look back on our day, our lives, or our relationships and be saddened because we failed to give attention to what is truly important.

St. Paul warned in his letter to St. Titus against letting foolish disputes, pointless arguments, or anything else distract us from what needs to be done: namely, good works, meeting the urgent needs of others, and bearing fruit in the Christian life. St. Paul reminds us to turn away from all the nonsense that tempts us from faithfulness to Christ, that threatens to distract us from the Lord and the service of His Church.

That is a necessary reminder whenever we find ourselves distracted from what is truly important. Perhaps part of the problem is that we forget what is really significant and how richly God has blessed us with His truth and life. It is fairly easy to ignore things that we take for granted or consider not worth mentioning. Unfortunately, it is very easy to make our life in Christ one of those assumed things that we end up neglecting.

The Lord Himself reminded the Apostles not to take what He had taught them for granted. He challenged them to see its importance: "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God." Yes, to that group of fishermen and other rough characters who had no particular importance or standing in that time and place, the Son of God had taught the greatest mysteries of the universe. Imagine that. The same is true for us, of course, as members of Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. He calls us not to be distracted from the glorious truth that we have received, either by taking it for granted or giving more attention to something else. Instead, we must respond to Him in a way appropriate to His great gift, which means doing what is necessary for us to grow in faith and bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Our Savior spoke of the word of God like seed cast upon the ground. But, of course, some of those seeds never even begin to grow because they fall along the wayside and are eaten by birds. And some who hear the good news of Christ do likewise, for they never even believe. Some seeds just begin to grow, but the sprouts die as soon as they spring up because they landed on rocks and could not put down roots and receive nourishment. And some who believe at first fall away quickly, for they never really opened themselves to the strength received through regular prayer, worship, fasting, repentance, communion, and all the other means of support for the Christian life that we experience through the Church.

Then there are seeds that grow into plants that do take root; they seem to be healthy, but are eventually choked by thorns and weeds. And some who make a good beginning in the Christian life allow themselves to be so distracted by their worries, riches, pleasures, and passions that their faith dies. A gardener who is too distracted by other activities to look out for weeds or to remember to water the plants will probably not be very successful. Likewise, a Christian who disregards the dangers posed by anger, greed, pride, lust, spiritual laziness, or other passions will not thrive. But some seeds fall on good ground, grow nicely, and yield a large crop. And some Christians not only hear the word of the Lord, but keep it in their hearts and lives, and bear fruit with patience. They do what needs to be done in order for them to flourish in the service of the Kingdom.

The thrust of this parable is clear: We have received the fullness of God's truth, the mystery of the Kingdom of God. We have put on Christ in baptism, been sealed by the Holy Spirit in chrismation, and nourished by the Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Christ Himself forgives us when we repent in Confession. In Jesus Christ, we receive our salvation, our fulfillment, as partakers in the divine nature. In His Body, the Church, we are taught the whole, complete faith of the Apostles. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, the Saints, who inspire us by their examples and help us by their prayers. In every Divine Liturgy, we join them and the entire heavenly host in the worship of the Holy Trinity.

God has given us all that we need for our salvation, our growth in holiness, and the healing of our souls. The problem is not with Him, but with us, for we often take our faith for granted and decide that there are more important matters than prayer, repentance, and serving others in the name of Christ. We become content with making our spiritual life a low priority to the point that we become sick and weak because we are too lazy or distracted to fight our passions and accept the healing and strength which the Lord gives us through the ministries of His Church. Too often, we rest content with bearing no fruit at all for the Kingdom. The problem is that, when we live like that, we become as weak and vulnerable as a plant in an un-watered and un-weeded garden; and then we have very little hope of thriving.

Of course, we all have our excuses. Out of pride, we would like to believe that our particular circumstances are so special that we are somehow justified in neglecting the way of Christ. The problem is that, regardless of our preferences or situation, we make ourselves spiritually weak and vulnerable whenever we do not take advantage of the opportunities we have each day to open ourselves to the presence and healing of the Lord through prayer, Bible reading, fasting, and service toward those around us. When we put off taking Confession so long that we never take it, we rob ourselves of the spiritual benefits of humble repentance and the assurance of Christ's forgiveness. When we freely choose to give our attention to what inflames our passions and turns us away from holiness, we weaken ourselves spiritually and reject the strength and healing of our Lord. Just as a lazy or inattentive gardener or farmer cannot expect a good crop, we cannot expect to flourish in the Christian life by allowing ourselves to be distracted on a regular basis from the kind of life to which Jesus Christ calls us.

But if we follow St. Paul's advice to become so busy with good works that we have no time or energy for foolish arguments or other pointless distractions, we will then be like the seed that landed on good soil, got proper nutrition, and produced a bumper crop. And despite the trials and tribulations of our lives, we will know already the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

That is the will of the Lord for each and every one of us, no matter how faithfully or unfaithfully we may have lived to this point in our lives. Through His Body, the Church, Christ has revealed to us all the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and we all have the ability to respond to our Lord's great mercy with repentance, love, and faithfulness each day.

So even if we have horribly neglected our spiritual garden, even if our souls are so full of weeds that we cannot see a sprout, much less bear fruit in our present condition, we still have hope because at the heart of the mystery of the Kingdom of God is divine mercy toward sinners like you and me. The good news is that in Christ Jesus there is always hope, there is always the promise of a new life with the blessing and peace of the Kingdom. We may all become good seed by turning away from distractions and excuses as we do what needs to be done to serve Him faithfully with repentance, humility, and love. As Christ said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Fr. Philip LeMasters